

# *Perineal Hernia*

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**Overview:** A perineal hernia develops from loss of muscular support of pelvic muscles. As these muscles deteriorate, there is a loss of rectal support and abdominal contents may no longer be held within the abdomen. This condition occurs most commonly in older, uncastrated male dogs and cats.

**Signs/symptoms:** Often a swelling is noted on one or both sides of the rectum. The pet may be constipated, have trouble defecating, or strain to defecate. If abdominal contents slip into the area around the rectum, the signs may be related—such as inability to urinate if the urinary bladder becomes entrapped, or abdominal pain and vomiting if a loop of intestines becomes strangulated within the hernia.

**Diagnosis:** Diagnosis is usually made on physical exam. A rectal exam reveals a defect and loss of muscular support on one or both sides of the rectum. Other tests may be recommended including bloodwork, urinalysis, and possibly radiographs or an abdominal ultrasound depending on what signs your pet is showing.

**Treatment:** Although this is most often an elective surgery, emergency surgery is indicated if the urinary bladder or other important structures become entrapped within the hernia. Treatment involves replacement of any herniated tissues back into the correct position (and surgically securing them into place if necessary) and surgical repair of the hernia. Repair of the hernia includes repair of the muscular defect using the internal obturator muscle as a muscle flap over the defect. In severe or recurrent cases, surgical mesh may be used. Castration of any unneutered male is recommended to help prevent recurrence.

**Aftercare/outcome:** Postoperatively, your pet will be on stool softeners as well as painkillers and antibiotics. Occasionally a drain will be placed that will be removed 2-4 days postop. Your dog will need to be kept quiet until sutures are removed approximately 2 weeks after surgery. Approximately 10-15% of dogs with perineal hernias will recur and the pet may require additional surgery.

*Please refer to the American College of Veterinary Surgeons website*

*[www.acvs.org](http://www.acvs.org) for additional information or call Dr. Boswell at 269-312-4227*